

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. In a relationship between an information provider and a plurality of
2 subscribers, each of the subscribers being associated with an alert gateway and a
3 corresponding distribution address, a system for providing an alert to a subscriber, the system
4 comprising:

5 an alert receiver configured to receive an alert message from at least one alert
6 source, the alert message being pertinent to at least one of the subscribers and comprising an
7 alert and associated alert information, the alert information providing information about the
8 alert, such the alert information can be analyzed to determine whether a particular subscriber
9 should receive the alert;

10 an alert distribution device in communication with the alert receiver and
11 further in communication with a communication network, wherein the alert distribution
12 device is configured to:

13 select, based on the alert information, a set of one or more distribution
14 addresses to which the alert applies; and

15 transmit the alert to the selected set of distribution addresses via the
16 communication network; and

17 an alert gateway in communication with the communication network, wherein
18 the alert gateway is:

19 associated with one of the distribution addresses;

20 adapted to receive the alert from the alert distribution device; and

21 configured to take at least one specific action with respect to the alert.

1 2. The system of claim 1, wherein the alert comprises urgent public
2 information.

1 3. The system of claim 2, wherein the urgent public information is
2 selected from a group consisting of an Emergency Alert System transmission, an Amber
3 Alert, a severe weather notification, and a Homeland Security Advisory notification.

1 4. The system of claim 1, wherein the alert gateway is incorporated
2 within a network interface device.

1 5. The system of claim 1, wherein the alert gateway is in communication
2 with a network interface device.

1 6. The system of claim 1, wherein the alert information is incorporated
2 within the alert.

1 7. The system of claim 1, wherein the alert information is additional to
2 the alert.

1 8. The system of claim 1, wherein the alert distribution device is further
2 configured to extract the alert information from the alert message.

1 9. The system of claim 8, wherein the alert distribution device is further
2 configured to analyze the alert information to determine the set of one or more distribution
3 addresses to which the alert applies.

1 10. The system of claim 1, wherein the communication network is selected
2 from a group consisting of a radio-frequency transmission, a telephone network, a cable
3 television distribution network, the Internet, a fiber-optic network, a high-speed data network,
4 a wireless network, and a microwave network.

1 11. The system of claim 1, wherein the communication network is a
2 plurality of communication networks and wherein, for a particular distribution address, the
3 alert distribution device is configured to select the most appropriate communication network
4 via which to transmit the alert information to the particular distribution address.

1 12. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one specific action
2 comprises transmitting a confirmation message to the alert distribution device, wherein the
3 confirmation message indicates that the alert was received by the alert gateway.

1 13. The system of claim 12, wherein the alert gateway is configured to
2 transmit the confirmation message via the communication network.

1 14. The system of claim 12, wherein the alert distribution device is
2 configured to retransmit the alert to the distribution address associated with the alert gateway
3 in the event that a confirmation message has not been received from the alert gateway within
4 a certain period of time.

1 15. The system of claim 14, wherein:
2 the communication network is a first communication network;

3 the alert distribution device is further in communication with a second
4 communication network, which is also in communication with the alert gateway; and
5 the alert distribution device is configured to select the second communication
6 network for retransmission of the alert.

1 16. The system of claim 1, further comprising an alert processing device
2 in communication with at least one of the alert distribution device and the alert gateway,
3 wherein the alert processing device is configured to process the alert.

1 17. The system of claim 16, wherein the alert receiver incorporates the
2 functionality of the alert processing device.

1 18. The system of claim 16, wherein the alert gateway incorporates the
2 functionality of the alert processing device.

1 19. The system of claim 16, wherein the alert distribution device
2 incorporates the functionality of the alert processing device.

1 20. The system of claim 16, wherein the alert comprises audio information,
2 and processing the alert comprises translating the audio information into textual information.

1 21. The system of claim 20, wherein translating the audio information
2 comprises extracting closed-captioning information from the video signal.

1 22. The system of claim 21, wherein translating the audio information
2 comprises converting a speech portion of the audio information to text.

1 23. The system of claim 16, wherein the alert comprises text, and wherein
2 processing the alert comprises converting the text to audio information.

1 24. The system of claim 16, wherein the alert is encoded, and wherein
2 processing the alert comprises decoding the alert.

1 25. The system of claim 24, where the alert is encoded with event and
2 location information conforming to the Emergency Alert System standards, and wherein
3 processing the alert comprises interpreting the event and location information.

1 26. The system of claim 25, wherein processing the alert further comprises
2 determining, based on the event and location information, the set of one or more distribution
3 addresses.

1 27. The system of claim 1, wherein the system further comprises an alert
2 notification device coupled to the alert gateway, and wherein the at least one specific action
3 comprises activating the alert notification device to inform a subscriber about the alert.

1 28. The system of claim 27, wherein informing a subscriber about the alert
2 comprises playing an audible signal.

1 29. The system of claim 28, wherein the audible signal comprises at least
2 one alert tone.

1 30. The system of claim 28, wherein the audible signal comprises an audio
2 signal associated with the alert.

1 31. The system of claim 27, wherein informing a subscriber about the alert
2 comprises displaying a visual alert signal.

1 32. The system of claim 31, wherein the visual alert signal comprises at
2 least one indicator light.

1 33. The system of claim 31, wherein the visual alert signal comprises a
2 video signal associated with the alert.

1 34. The system of claim 31, wherein the visual alert signal comprises a
2 text message associated with the alert.

1 35. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one specific action
2 comprises transmitting the alert to at least one subscriber device.

1 36. The system of claim 35, wherein the at least one subscriber device
2 includes a set of features associated with the at least one subscriber device, the alert gateway
3 being configured to process the alert according to the set of features associated with the at
4 least one subscriber device prior to sending the alert to the at least one subscriber device.

1 37. The system of claim 35, wherein the at least one subscriber device is a
2 plurality of subscriber devices.

1 38. The system of claim 37, wherein each of the plurality of subscriber
2 devices includes a set of features associated with that subscriber device, the alert gateway
3 being configured to process the alert according to the set of features associated with each
4 particular subscriber device prior to sending the alert to that particular subscriber device.

1 39. The system of claim 35, wherein the subscriber device is selected from
2 the group consisting of a wireless telephone, a POTS telephone, an IP telephone, a personal
3 computer, laptop computer, a handheld computer, a webpad, a television, a set-top box, and a
4 pager.

1 40. The system of claim 35, wherein the at least one specific action further
2 comprises anticipating a confirmation message from the at least one subscriber device
3 indicating that the alert was received.

1 41. The system of claim 40, wherein, if no confirmation message is
2 received from the subscriber device within a certain time interval, the at least one specific
3 action further comprises retransmitting the alert.

1 42. The system of claim 41, wherein the alert is retransmitted to the
2 subscriber device.

1 43. The system of claim 41, wherein the alert is retransmitted to a second
2 subscriber device.

1 44. The system of claim 40, wherein, if no notification is received from the
2 subscriber device within a certain time interval, the at least one specific action further
3 comprises transmitting a failure message to the alert distribution device.

1 45. The system of claim 1, wherein the alert distribution device is in
2 communication with a storage medium, the storage medium being configured to store
3 selection criteria associated with each of a plurality of distribution addresses, the alert
4 distribution device being configured to select at least one distribution address to which the
5 alert applies based on a correlation between the alert information and a selection criterion for
6 the at least one distribution address.

1 46. The system of claim 45, wherein the selection criterion is selected from
2 the group consisting of a subscriber's geographic location, a subscriber's personal
3 information, a subscriber's entertainment preferences, a subscriber's school location, and a
4 subscriber's financial information.

1 47. In a relationship between an information provider and a plurality of
2 subscribers, each of the subscribers being associated with an alert gateway and a
3 corresponding distribution address, a method for providing an alert to a subscriber, the
4 method comprising:
5 receiving an alert message from at least one alert source, the alert message
6 being pertinent to at least one of the subscribers and comprising an alert and associated alert
7 information, the alert information providing information about the alert, such the alert
8 information can be analyzed to determine whether a particular subscriber should receive the
9 alert;
10 selecting, based on the nature of the alert, a set of one or more distribution
11 addresses to which the alert pertains; and
12 transmitting the alert to an alert gateway associated with one of the set of
13 distribution addresses.

1 48. The method of claim 47, wherein the alert comprises urgent public
2 information.

1 49. The method of claim 48, wherein the urgent public information is
2 selected from a group consisting of an Emergency Alert System transmission, an Amber
3 Alert, a severe weather notification, and a Homeland Security Advisory notification.

1 50. The method of claim 47, wherein the alert information is incorporated
2 within the alert.

1 51. The method of claim 47, wherein the alert information is additional to
2 the alert.

1 52. The method of claim 47, further comprising extracting the alert
2 information from the alert message.

1 53. The method of claim 52, further comprising analyzing the alert
2 information to determine the set of one or more distribution addresses to which the alert
3 pertains.

1 54. The method of claim 47, wherein transmitting the alert to the alert
2 gateway comprises transmitting the alert message to the alert gateway.

1 55. The method of claim 47, further comprising:
2 anticipating a confirmation message from the alert gateway; and
3 if no confirmation message is received within a certain time interval,
4 retransmitting the alert.

1 56. The method of claim 55, wherein:
2 transmitting the alert comprises transmitting the alert via a first path; and
3 retransmitting the alert comprises transmitting the alert via a second path.

1 57. The method of claim 55, wherein:
2 transmitting the alert comprises transmitting the alert via a specific path; and
3 retransmitting the alert comprises transmitting the alert a second time via the
4 same path.

1 58. The method of claim 47, further comprising processing the alert.

1 59. The method of claim 58, wherein the alert comprises audio
2 information, and processing the alert comprises translating the audio information into textual
3 information.

1 60. The method of claim 59, wherein translating the audio information
2 comprises extracting closed-captioning information from a video signal.

1 61. The method of claim 58, wherein the alert comprises text, and wherein
2 processing the alert comprises converting the text to audio information.

1 62. The method of claim 58, wherein the alert is encoded, and wherein
2 processing the alert comprises decoding the alert.

1 63. The method of claim 62, where the alert is encoded with event and
2 location information conforming to the Emergency Alert System standards, and wherein
3 processing the alert comprises interpreting the event and location information.

1 64. The method of claim 47, further comprising:
2 receiving the alert at the alert gateway; and
3 taking a specific action in response to the alert.

1 65. The method of claim 64, wherein taking a specific action comprises
2 informing the subscriber about the alert.

1 66. The method of claim 65, wherein informing the subscriber about the
2 alert comprises playing an audible signal.

1 67. The method of claim 66, wherein the audible signal comprises at least
2 one alert tone.

1 68. The method of claim 66, wherein the audible signal comprises at an
2 audio signal associated with the alert.

1 69. The method of claim 65, wherein informing the subscriber about the
2 alert comprises displaying a visual alert signal.

1 70. The method of claim 69, wherein the visual alert signal comprises at
2 least one indicator light.

1 71. The method of claim 69, wherein the visual alert signal comprises a
2 video signal associated with the alert.

1 72. The method of claim 69, wherein the visual alert signal comprises a
2 text message associated with the alert.

1 73. The method of claim 64, wherein taking a specific action comprises
2 transmitting the alert to at least one subscriber device.

1 74. The method of claim 73, wherein the at least one subscriber device
2 includes a set of features associated with the at least one subscriber device, the method
3 further comprising processing the alert according to the set of features associated with the at
4 least one subscriber device prior to sending the alert to the at least one subscriber device.

1 75. The method of claim 73, wherein the at least one subscriber device
2 comprises a plurality of subscriber devices.

1 76. The method of claim 75, wherein each of the plurality of subscriber
2 devices includes a set of features associated with that subscriber device, the method further
3 comprising processing the alert according to the set of features associated with each
4 particular subscriber device prior to sending the alert to that particular subscriber device.

1 77. The method of claim 73, wherein the subscriber device is selected from
2 the group consisting of a wireless telephone, a POTS telephone, an IP telephone, a personal
3 computer, a handheld computer, a television, a set-top box, and a pager.

1 78. The method of claim 73, wherein the at least one specific action further
2 comprises anticipating a confirmation message from the at least one subscriber device.

1 79. The method of claim 78, wherein, if no confirmation message is
2 received from the at least one subscriber device within a certain time interval, the method
3 further comprises retransmitting the alert.

1 80. The method of claim 79, wherein retransmitting the alert comprises
2 retransmitting the alert to the at least one subscriber device.

1 81. The method of claim 79, wherein retransmitting the alert comprises
2 transmitting the information to at least one additional subscriber device.

1 82. The method of claim 78, wherein, if no confirmation message is
2 received from the at least one subscriber device within a certain time interval, the method
3 further comprises transmitting a failure message to the alert distribution device.

1 83. A system for providing an alert to a subscriber, the system comprising:
2 means for receiving an alert message from at least one alert source, the alert
3 message being pertinent to at least one of the subscribers and comprising an alert and
4 associated alert information, the alert information providing information about the alert, such
5 the alert information can be analyzed to determine whether a particular subscriber should
6 receive the alert;
7 means for selecting, based on the nature of the alert, a set of one or more
8 distribution addresses to which the alert pertains; and
9 means for transmitting the alert to the set of one or more distribution
10 addresses to which the alert pertains.

1 84. The system of claim 83, wherein the alert comprises urgent public
2 information.

1 85. The system of claim 84, wherein the urgent public information is
2 selected from a group consisting of an Emergency Alert System transmission, an Amber
3 Alert, a severe weather notification, and a Homeland Security Advisory notification.

1 86. The system of claim 83, wherein the alert information is incorporated
2 within the alert.

1 87. The system of claim 83, wherein the alert information is additional to
2 the alert.

1 88. The system of claim 83, further comprising means for extracting the
2 alert information from the alert message.

1 89. The system of claim 83, wherein the means for transmitting the alert is
2 configured to transmit the alert message.

1 90. The method of claim 88, further comprising means for analyzing the
2 alert information to determine the set of one or more distribution addresses to which the alert
3 pertains.

1 91. The system of claim 83, wherein each of the set of distribution
2 addresses is associated with an alert gateway.

1 92. The system of claim 83, further comprising means for anticipating a
2 confirmation message associated with each of the distribution addresses, the confirmation
3 message associated with a particular distribution address serving to indicate that the alert was
4 received by a device associated with that particular distribution address.

1 93. The system of claim 92, further comprising means for retransmitting
2 the alert to a distribution address in the event that a confirmation message associated with
3 that distribution address has not been received within a certain period of time.

1 94. The system of claim 83, further comprising:
2 means for receiving the alert, and, in response to the alert, taking at least one
3 specific action.

1 95. The system of claim 94, further comprising means for processing the
2 alert, the means for processing the alert being in communication with the means for receiving
3 the alert.

1 96. The system of claim 83, further comprising:
2 means for processing the alert, the means for processing the alert being in
3 communication with at least one of the means for selecting a set of one or more distribution
4 addresses to which the alert pertains and the means for transmitting the alert.

1 97. In a relationship between an information provider and a plurality of
2 subscribers, each of the subscribers being associated with an alert gateway and a
3 corresponding distribution address, an alert distribution device for providing an alert to a
4 subscriber, the device comprising:

5 means for receiving an alert message, the alert message comprising an alert
6 and associated alert information;

7 a processor in communication with the means for receiving an alert message;

8 means for transmitting an alert to an alert gateway; and

9 a computer-readable storage medium in communication with the processor,
10 the computer-readable storage medium comprising instructions executable by the processor
11 to:

12 store on the computer-readable storage medium a directory of alert
13 gateways, each alert gateway being associated with a distribution address;

14 determine, based on the alert information, a set of one or more
15 distribution addresses to which the alert applies; and
16 using the means for transmitting an alert to an alert gateway, transmit
17 the alert to a set of alert gateways, wherein each of the alert gateways is associated
18 with a member of the selected set of distribution addresses.